



## Highlights of Costa Rica

Jungles, mountains and gorgeous coastlines: Costa Rica is a natural paradise! A tropical wonderland just bursting with wildlife. Christopher Columbus was quite right in christening Costa Rica the 'Rich Coast' when he first saw it in 1502.



8 days/7 nights

### ITINERARY

#### Day 1: San Jose

Plan to arrive at the hotel in San Jose this afternoon or evening. This evening is the perfect opportunity to meet your guide and get to know your fellow travellers.

#### Day 2: Tortuguero National Park

Our adventure begins early this morning, leaving San Jose behind as we travel to the north-east of Costa Rica to Tortuguero National Park. Accessible only by boat or light aircraft, Tortuguero's vast network of waterways, canals and swamps is remarkably tranquil, unspoilt and devoid of noise pollution. On reaching the pier we board a small motorboat for the one hour fifteen minute journey to our lodge, which is nestled in the heart of the main lagoon. Our afternoon is spent in Tortuguero village, where it's possible to visit the Sea Turtle Museum (a donation will be requested at the entrance). Tortuguero is probably most famous as a nesting site for the endangered Green turtle, which can be seen arriving onto the beach to lay eggs from late July to October (as part of an optional excursion). Hawksbill, Loggerhead and Giant Leatherback turtles also nest in this region, and during November to January baby turtles start to hatch and make their way towards the ocean. Today's travel time will be in the region of five to six hours including a break for breakfast.

#### Day 3: Tortuguero National Park

An early morning boat trip enables us to discover the extraordinary flora and fauna of Tortuguero, passing serenely along the waterways. At this time of day wildlife is usually at its most active and with the help of our expert guide we are likely to encounter monkeys, caiman, iguanas, butterflies and many of the 300+ bird species recorded here. We return to the lodge for a hearty breakfast by the river. This afternoon we return to the waterways for a second boat trip along a different canal. Alternatively, the lodge is a tranquil spot to relax this afternoon if you want to take some time out to enjoy the facilities or follow a short walking trail through the forest.

#### Day 4: La Fortuna

Leave Tortuguero the same way we arrived by taking a small boat to the pier. Our bus will be at the pier waiting to drive us to the region of Arenal, passing huge banana, pineapple and sugar cane plantations on the way. Arenal was Costa Rica's most active volcano until fairly recently, when it entered a resting phase and can no longer be seen spitting ash, smoke or lava. However there is still a lot of geothermal activity in the area and you'll have the opportunity to visit one of the excellent hot springs this evening. Alternatively have a go on the Sky Tram / Sky Trek, departing at 5pm. In clear weather there are great views of the volcano from our overnight base, the nearby town of La Fortuna. Today's travelling time is around five and a half hours including a lunch stop.

#### Day 5: Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge



Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge and the Frío River combine to create a humid area that is a very biodiverse and harbours a great variety of resident and migratory birds, three different species of monkey, iguanas, sloths, turtles, and caimans. We transfer approximately 1.5 hours to the village of Los Chiles, found close to the Nicaraguan border. From here we board a boat for our river adventure, which lasts around 2.5 hours and passes through tropical rainforest and pastures until we arrive at the marshlands. The Olivaceous cormorant makes its nests in the area and Wood storks and jabiru (the largest bird in Central America and much endangered) can also be seen. Along the river we may also see Howler monkeys, Three-toed sloths, caimans, lizards, and turtles.

#### **Day 6: Monteverde, Tilaran Mountains**

From Arenal we travel to the Tilaran Mountain Range in the Central Highlands for our first taste of a Costa Rican cloud forest. The journey provides breathtaking views of the Gulf of Nicoya and the islands below as we ascend the hills towards Monteverde, a forest-cloaked region whose name literally means 'Green Mountain'. The high altitude supports a complex eco-system where plants thrive, particularly orchids of which there are some 400+ different varieties here. Today's drive is around four hours- the last 40km of road is gravel and can be bumpy, particularly following heavy rain. In the afternoon it's possible to join an optional coffee tour to learn about the importance of this crop to the socio-economic development of the country.

This evening we set off on a night walk in Monteverde Wildlife Refuge. Situated within primary cloud forest, this reserve is committed to the preservation of native flora and fauna. Taking a nocturnal walk allows for a completely new perspective on the forest, which our guides will bring to life for us!

#### **Day 7: Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve**

Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve is a favourite destination for birdwatchers and wildlife enthusiasts. A walk through the reserve will reveal huge old growth trees covered in moss whilst the surrounding mist permeates the atmosphere. The reserve's geographic, topographic and climatic conditions have allowed for a surprising biodiversity to thrive. There are four ecological "Life Zones" that harbour different ecosystems for hundreds of species - mammals, birds, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, insects and arachnids. We can also find a variety of mosses, vines, other plants and trees typical of the cloud forest. One of the trails of the reserve leads to a lookout point right at the top of the continental divide where, on clear days, you can be privy to the breathtaking view of both of Costa Rica's coasts: the Caribbean and the Pacific. These forests are also one of the few remaining habitats of the endangered Resplendent Quetzal.

#### **Day 8: San Jose**

After breakfast today the tour comes to an end. It's time to bid Costa Rica and your travelling companions farewell. A transfer is included to the airport based on your flight time, or you may choose to extend your stay for an extra day to explore San Jose.

## Details

#### **Trip Code:**

009390 - W20

#### **INCLUDED**

- Airport transfers in San Jose on arrival and departure
- Guided touring as outlined in itinerary
- 7 nights of hotel and lodge accommodation
- Breakfast daily
- 4 lunches
- 2 dinners

#### **NOT INCLUDED**

- International flights to/from San Jose, Costa Rica
- Single supplement for single-use accommodation
- Travel Insurance
- Items of a personal nature
- Visas or vaccinations, if required

#### **TOUR NOTES**

Please note, the order of the tour components was correct at the time of publishing but may change due to local conditions. Every attempt will be made to run the tour as outlined but some changes may be unavoidable.

Home to 6% of the world's plant and animal species, many endemic, the country's rich biodiversity is extremely colourful. Over 850 bird species have been recorded here - far more than found anywhere in North America, Europe



and Australia. A cornucopia of exotic flora and fauna, Costa Rica is a nature lover's delight.

*This is an active trip.*

It is suitable for those with a spirit of adventure, however the pace is manageable and the included activities are suitable for beginners if you have no experience of them already (e.g caving, snorkelling). In order to visit a number of areas of natural beauty, some long drives are necessary, sometimes across bumpy roads. We will also travel by boat to and from Caye Caulker. Please be aware that border crossings can sometimes be delayed with significant queues and formalities. Being in the tropics, most of the region is hot and humid, particularly during the summer months and inland - drinking plenty of water and dressing in loose cotton clothing will help.

*Disclaimer: We do our utmost to ensure that information posted on our website is correct at the time of publication, however trip details are subject to change without notice by the suppliers and operators involved. We update the information as soon as possible when changes are advised to us, however, we cannot assume responsibility for such changes made by the suppliers and operators.*

### ROUTE MAP



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